



Kellogg Rural Scholars Series

Vol. 5, July 2025

Leadership Insights



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More publications from the Kellogg Rural Scholars Series:

- Red Meat Insights, December 2023
- Māori Agribusiness Insights, January 2023
- Dairy Insights, June 2022
- Horticulture Insights, April 2022



Introduction.

New Zealand’s food and fibre sector is full of capable, and purpose driven people.

Supported by an incredible group of partners, the New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust is privileged to be entrusted with growing many of these people on their leadership journey.

A key aspect of the rural leadership approach is research-based scholarship. The clarity of thought and confidence this approach promotes is transformative.

The set of reports covered on the following pages are by Scholars from the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme.

Many Kellogg and Nuffield Scholars go on to live their research. They build businesses. They advance community and social enterprises.

They influence policy and advocate for animal and environmental outcomes, informed by an ability for critical analysis and their own research-fueled passion.

In the following pages we are pleased to summarise 12 research reports by Kellogg Scholars. The full reports can be found at <https://ruralleaders.co.nz/kellogg-our-insights/>

The reports cover such topics as: the effect of leadership on retention, emotional intelligence, leading in a crisis, leader attributes, and transformational leadership.

These reports are written by people living and working in our food and fibre sector.

Ngā mihi,

Lisa Rogers
and the NZ Rural Leaders Team

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Leadership Qualities needed for first time managers.



Jack Dwyer

July 2025

Leadership in New Zealand Agriculture, with a focus on people management, has only become a widespread discussion topic in recent years. There is a need for effective people management as the sector relies heavily on manual labour to achieve business success. Managers in the sector have historically been promoted from within the sector based on good technical capabilities. What may not be well understood is that the knowledge capability associated with being technically proficient, does not necessarily correspond with being an effective manager.

This report aims to describe a small qualitative study conducted on a group of farm owners, managers and leaders. It will also describe the qualities and attributes identified in these leaders and how the learnings can be utilised and applied by. The leaders interviewed have largely learnt and refined the skills, knowledge and tools they use to lead well, through trial and error. On top of trial-and-error learning, some of the interviewees had attended short form courses, as well as using their respective industries for support. All the interviewees

The leaders interviewed in this study all displayed transformational leadership qualities. These qualities revolved around empowerment through trust in their employees. They recognised that they needed to understand each employee as individuals to get the best out of them, and once they truly appreciated them individually, it was easier to empower them. All of the leaders interviewed dealt with conflict management as part of their role, however, most admitted to being non-confrontational people. They understood the need to display positive leadership traits during conflict management in order to have a functioning business. They had learnt to put more effort into doing it better as they moved through their leadership journey.

novice or first-time managers.

The research shows that good managers prioritise the care and welfare of their employees. They ensure that good communication about work and home life is enacted to better understand how their employees are feeling. This leads to a relationship of increased trust, which helps the leader engage with staff about the business and its operations. Leaders ensure they behave consistently with all their staff to role model good behaviour and understand conflict. The leaders interviewed have all grown in their leadership skills and have come to value reflection and introspection. This has been used to improve further on their leadership traits.

have, over the course of their leadership journey, relied heavily on trusted mentors to help guide them. The ability for a leader to utilise the knowledge and advice of a more experienced leader has helped all interviewees grow.

The leaders interviewed recognised that good leadership was not always the easy choice when managing people, but the long-term gain made it worth it. They recognised that time, effort and focus had to be implemented on a daily basis in order to achieve good management practices. The structure and financial constraints of a business might also impact a manager's capabilities to practice good leadership. They also warned that a manager's ego would quickly ruin hopes of good leadership, as it restricted individualism and ingenuity of employees.



<https://ruralleaders.co.nz/leadership-qualities-needed-for-first-time-managers/>



Growing Leaders, Growing Impact: Empowering the missing middle in Aotearoa agrifood leadership.



Jordi Hoult

December 2024

The agrifood sector in New Zealand faces challenges in developing leadership among mid-career professionals, particularly those aged 30-50 who often find themselves in a “missing middle,” with initiatives aimed at early career, and insights sought from current leaders.

This study examines how leadership development opportunities can be strengthened, using the question: How can leadership development opportunities be enhanced to support Aotearoa New Zealand food and fibre professionals in the growth phase of their careers?

The objectives were to assess current development initiatives, analyse challenges, and offer strategic recommendations to better support mid-career professionals. This work is critical, as a robust, inclusive leadership pipeline ensures the sector’s adaptability and sustainability, preparing it for future challenges and innovation.

The research combined a literature review with qualitative data from a digital survey and in-depth interviews involving a diverse set of sector professionals. Themes were analysed to develop comprehensive recommendations.

Key findings

Leadership gaps: Opportunities are fragmented, often inaccessible, and lack inclusivity. Without dedicated development for mid-career professionals, the sector risks a stagnated leadership pipeline, where experienced individuals lack the growth opportunities needed to step into higher leadership roles effectively.

Compounding barriers: Time, financial constraints, personal circumstances, and cultural biases hinder access to leadership

development. If these barriers are not addressed, there will be ongoing inequities in leadership accessibility, potentially exacerbating talent shortages and reducing sector-wide innovation as diverse perspectives are left untapped.

Cultural shift: There is a need to redefine leadership, emphasising diversity, cross-sector collaboration, and continuous learning. Embracing more inclusive and diverse leadership approaches will improve organisational adaptability and attract a wider talent pool, fostering a more resilient and innovative food and fibre sector capable of responding to future challenges.

Recommendations

- For current leaders: champion inclusion of diverse perspectives, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and roles that leverage lived experience.
- For existing initiatives: Explore opportunities to include diverse perspectives, including the use of technology to enhance equitable access.
- For individuals: articulate your values, drivers, and “why”, and use these to identify where you can add value and feel valued.
- For myself: Investigate implementing a digitally based pan-sector mentoring programme, and investigate multimedia, multichannel storytelling of diverse leaders.

*Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.
With your food basket, and my food basket,
the people will thrive.*



<https://ruralleaders.co.nz/growing-leaders-growing-impact-empowering-the-missing-middle-in-aotearoa-agrifood-leadership/>



Creating a Thriving Food and Fibre Sector for Rangatahi in Aotearoa: He Ara Whakatipu.



Cheyenne Wilson

December 2024

Ka mua, ki muri – Walking backwards into the future.

The food and fibre sector stands as a cornerstone of Aotearoa's economy, employing 367,000 people and contributing significantly through agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and fisheries. With Māori assets in the sector valued at over \$23 billion, and rangatahi Māori comprising a substantial proportion of the Māori population, the future of the industry is intrinsically linked to the empowerment and success of these young leaders. This report explores the barriers rangatahi face, identifies opportunities for growth, and offers strategies to create a thriving and inclusive sector where rangatahi Māori can lead with confidence and pride.

Through kaupapa Māori-centred research, including surveys and wānanga, this study captures the lived experiences of rangatahi and their supporters. It reveals that systemic challenges, such as limited access to culturally aligned education and training, insufficient career guidance, financial constraints, and workplaces that fail to authentically integrate tikanga Māori, are significant barriers to their success. Many rangatahi feel disconnected from industry pathways that do not reflect their values or aspirations, while financial pressures and geographical isolation further compound these challenges.

However, the research also highlights transformative opportunities for change. Initiatives grounded in Te Ao Māori values, including culturally aligned leadership programmes, mentorship networks, and hands-on training schemes, have already

shown their potential to foster confidence, build skills, and inspire rangatahi to see their place within the sector. These successes demonstrate the importance of prioritising cultural authenticity, holistic support, and equitable access in fostering meaningful engagement.

Te Whare Tapa Whā, Mason Durie's holistic model of wellbeing, provides a vital framework for understanding what it means for rangatahi to thrive. Participants described success as more than individual achievement, emphasising the importance of balance across spiritual, emotional, physical, and social dimensions. Thriving is inherently collective, rooted in contributions to whānau, hapū, and iwi, and in alignment with cultural identity and aspirations.

To enable rangatahi Māori to thrive, the report identifies the need for systemic change across the food and fibre sector. Education and training programmes must reflect Māori values and provide clear, culturally aligned pathways into meaningful careers. Mentorship, grounded in Māori perspectives, can connect rangatahi with role models who inspire and guide them toward leadership roles.

Workplaces must become inclusive spaces where tikanga Māori is authentically integrated, creating environments where Māori identity is valued and celebrated. Financial support, including scholarships and subsidies, is critical for reducing economic pressures and enabling rangatahi to fully participate. Additionally, amplifying Māori leadership and sharing success stories can inspire others and challenge outdated perceptions of the sector.

The vision outlined in this report is of a food and fibre sector that honours the strengths of Māori culture, values, and leadership. In this future, rangatahi Māori are not only participants but transformative leaders, shaping an industry that is innovative, sustainable, and deeply reflective of Aotearoa's bicultural heritage. Achieving this vision requires a collective commitment to dismantling barriers, fostering inclusivity, and embracing Māori perspectives at every level.

This is a moment of immense opportunity. By addressing the challenges identified and implementing the strategies proposed, the food and fibre sector can position itself as a global leader in cultural authenticity and sustainability. Empowering rangatahi Māori is not just an investment in individuals but a commitment to securing the future resilience and prosperity of the sector for generations to come.

The vision presented here is one of a food and fibre sector where rangatahi Māori are not only participants but transformative leaders. By addressing systemic barriers and embracing the strengths of Māori culture and identity, the sector can lead globally in sustainability, innovation, and cultural authenticity. This is a unique opportunity to act collectively, ensuring the sector's resilience and prosperity for generations to come.



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Harvard case method for early career professionals in the New Zealand primary industries.



Louis Batley

July 2024

The world is becoming more complex, with increased geopolitical volatility. The New Zealand primary sector is heavily exposed to this volatility through trade, so future leaders must be skilled in navigating complex environments.

Research has highlighted a gap in leadership development, especially at an early career professional level in the New Zealand primary sector (Parsons and Nelson, 2023). Furthermore, there is a disconnect between the available programmes.

One such programme is the Strategic Thinking for Agrifood Management Programme (STAMP). This programme is unique in New Zealand. It uses the Harvard Case Method (HCTM), a form of teaching case studies, and case study competitions to develop strategic thinking and leadership skills in the primary sector for early career professionals.

This research aims to understand the benefits of using these methods, using STAMP as a research case study. The objectives of this study were to:

- Identify skills and benefits developed from the programme.
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of the programme
- Identify what additional factors outside of the case studies were important in the programme's effectiveness.
- Identify what could be improved.

A literature review of the HCM and case study competitions was done to see what skills the programme can improve and what is required for the teaching method to be effective. This informed the eleven semi-structured interviews with STAMP participants, which were analysed using thematic analysis.

Included in the interviews was a short Likert scale questionnaire on what skills and benefits they believe they got from the scholarship.

The analysis indicated that the HCM and case study competitions effectively improve soft skills, such as confidence and critical thinking abilities, as well as analytical skills, building networks and gaining knowledge



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around the global agrifood system. All these skills are helpful for strategic thinking and leadership development, especially soft skills.

For effective learning to occur, there needs to be the proper environmental conditions, such as a good learning environment where people can openly discuss ideas. In addition to this, in-person field trips effectively improved the participants' learning experience and helped to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Some recommended steps that the New Zealand primary sector could adopt for capability development in early career professionals include:

1. Implement the Harvard Case Method and case study competitions into leadership development programmes for the Primary Sector
2. Optimise environmental conditions for learning in HCM courses (Figure 4).
3. Provide greater availability for facilitator training in HCM.

Recommended steps for STAMP include:

1. Follow up on this research in 10 years to identify how STAMP contributed to participants' career development.
2. Use past participants for mentoring.



What leadership characteristics are required for the New Zealand primary industry to achieve the transformational change required?



Brian Henderson

July 2023

The New Zealand primary industry is operating in challenging times. There is much pressure for the primary industry to instigate change, with a level of tension not seen since the 1984 deregulation and removal of subsidies. The reality facing our industry is that time has been allowed to march on without enough progress having been made to address the global and national challenges upon us. New Zealand farmers and growers are no longer able to manage their business within the four pegs of their boundary in isolation. Instead decisions made inside the farm gate increasingly have consequences on others in our communities, district/region, and beyond.

This research considered what leadership characteristics are required to support the primary industry in bringing about change. The project explores case studies of transformational change that have been successful and/or which could have been carried out better and/or achieved more. The report also reflects on characteristics and examples of good and not-so-good leadership gained through semi-structured interviews.

The aim and purpose of the research was to identify what leadership is and how it can facilitate or hinder transformational change. The research aimed to critically assess, compare and contrast characteristics of leadership which are displayed while undertaking transformational change. This type of reflection is important because change commonly has aspects that are unknown or ambiguous. Leadership, by virtue of its definition, is leading people to navigate ambiguity. This report provides insights and frameworks for tools to support leaders.

The research demonstrates the need to address challenging issues early in order to gain agreement as to the way forward, with collective buy in and a shared understanding around the urgency to change. For this to occur, the research demonstrates that people want to understand 'the why' and be 'taken on the journey' when being led.

Given the extent of the challenges facing farmers and growers to make changes on farm, New Zealand farmers and growers deserve the best leadership. This project is important when considering the issues facing leadership within the industry, and seeks to challenge the status quo with a view to encouraging change and how we are leading our industry (across primary sectors) in these extraordinary times.

Recommendations;

1. The chair of the Board's for Beef + Lamb New Zealand and DairyNZ to conduct a review of their Director's appetite to support leading change on climate emissions reductions jointly with Ministry for Primary Industries.
2. All of the primary industry levy bodies to implement a change framework, be transparent about what it is, and have accountability to achieve milestones, within a stepped process.
3. The Ministry for Primary Industries, in collaboration with levy bodies to survey farmers about what farmers and growers are seeking in terms of leadership, providing a foundation for opinions to be heard on these matters.



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Lead your people – they will stay. The impact leadership has on staff engagement and retention.



Melissa King

July 2022

A highly skilled and valued staff member resigning can damage any team or business. Impacts can include significant loss of sales, productivity, and intellectual property loss, not to mention the costs of replacing a staff member. In this current era of low employee engagement and high employee turnover, organisations are losing good and valued people.

This research aimed to understand the impact of leadership on engagement and retention and provide recommendations on how organisations can identify the problem and introduce a meaningful approach to improve culture, engagement, and retention in their organisations.

The reasons for disengagement and turnover in organisations were discovered by comparing, contrasting, and evaluating the significant factors contributing to thriving organisational cultures with engaged and committed people.

This research project consists of a literature review, semi-structured interviews, and a thematic analysis to identify themes. From the analysis, data were evaluated to pinpoint key areas of importance.

Leadership's impact on staff fulfillment, engagement, and retention is significant and is the fundamental driving factor that can make or break an organisation's culture, engagement, and retention.

Organisations and leaders recognise the need and underlying benefits of creating a people-centred culture.

Employees will flourish in an environment that is focused on care, support, and growth.

Leadership is instrumental in driving these outcomes, and not enough focus is being placed on this. More significant investment in leadership is the denominating factor in improving culture, engagement, and retention.

Recommendations

- Make leadership a genuine focus on strategic imperatives.
- Identify strategies that cultivate a people-centric leadership model to deliver successful engagement and retention outcomes.
- Cease relying on engagement survey data as the sole feedback for workplace engagement.
- Convene a working party with a cross-section of people across the business that will meet to review the current organisational culture to create meaningful, authentic, and transparent guiding principles of leadership for the organisation.
- Commission a case study that investigates people-centric businesses that are achieving success.
- Prioritise a leadership recruitment strategy with clearly defined guidelines that identify specific leadership skills and attributes that will support recruiting the right people and align with the guiding principles of leadership.
- Invest in setting up a leadership development programme to deliver the training and skills for a people-centric leadership model.



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Leadership during a crisis – How New Zealand’s Horticulture Leaders Responded to Covid-19.



Henry McIntosh

July 2022

The Covid-19 pandemic hit New Zealand during 2020 and the horticulture sector was immediately faced with an extremely challenging situation. The sector was operating under very strict rules and experienced significant effects to the wider supply chain. But overall, the sector performed very well during 2020.

The aim of this report is to understand how the New Zealand horticulture sector successfully navigated the unknown during the initial phase of the pandemic, specifically focusing on leadership.

The question I wanted to answer was ‘what are the most effective leadership strategies during a crisis?’.

I completed a literature review to analyse some of the previous work done on crisis leadership and interviewed six senior leaders from New Zealand’s horticulture sector. These people were actively involved in directing the industry and leading their stakeholders through the early phase of the pandemic.

The clear answer to my question regarding the most effective crisis leadership strategy was to implement a people-first approach. Removing the controllable worries that people have about the situation. Keeping people busy to maintain a sense of purpose and continuing a level of social interaction are all key parts of a people-first strategy.

With this approach, people are motivated to continue as normal and will often create better results. A lot of the interviewees

reported better team engagement, efficiencies, and overall business performance during this period.

It is clear, that without this people-first approach, New Zealand’s horticulture sector would not have managed this period as successfully as it did.

Communication was also a significant part of the successful leadership strategy. There was no fear about potentially over-communicating. Getting the correct and most up to date information out to all stakeholders quickly was a focus. Many communication systems have been completely refreshed as a result.

The pandemic situation was developing so quickly, that often learnings from previous weeks or from other businesses were very useful to handle new challenges. Being conscious of the learning opportunity was challenging for businesses, but once embraced, systems and processes improved significantly.



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Recommendations:

- Cultivate a company culture that puts people first and ensure that staff can recognise this prioritisation.
- Review and re-create the existing communication plans to ensure the best tools and strategies are being used.
- Invest in professional development and networking opportunities to continually up-skill staff and create opportunities for pan-industry connections.



Utilising transformational leadership to increase team performance.



Jason Halford

2021 and prior

Leadership is a widely researched and analysed phenomena. Done well or poorly, it affects team members, their performance and business outcomes on many levels. Leadership theory has developed over time from a focus on the characteristics of the leader to a new perspective which highlights the relationship between leader and follower.

Having formally considered the charisma and personality of the leader paramount, theory has moved to consider the ways in which the leader-follower relationship can be strengthened and can affect team performance as a whole. Transformational leadership is an engaging, inspiring and motivational style of leadership, which can be applied with success on a dairy farm, affecting team members, leaders, daily operation, business outcomes and the wider industry as a whole.

This paper conducts a literature review and a survey of leaders on dairy farms to consider the application of transformational leadership on farm. A model of leadership developed by Kouzes and Posner (2012)

is considered in particular and found to be practical, effective and worth on-farm leaders engaging with. 54 on-farm leaders completed the 17-question survey, which broadly suggested that respondents recognise the importance of their leadership on their people and performance.

Survey results also suggest that confidence in leading effectively could be improved and that while respondents understood the importance of key transformational approaches and tools, their use and application of them on-farm could be strengthened.

Respondents also highlight particular areas of challenge for leadership on dairy farms, which are addressed in this paper. Recommendations are also made for individual leaders and for the wider industry as a whole.



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Effective primary sector leadership for the 21st century.



Sophie Malone

2021 and prior

“The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift” Kasantoff (2017). Although this might be a paraphrase of Albert Einstein’s work, it is a quote that has spread all across the world and is a great example of right brain intuition and left brain rationalisation.

It is no secret that traditional leadership in New Zealand’s primary sector, and many sectors for that matter, have been known to be very logical and analytical. These leaders enjoy familiar, accurate and practical ideas. These attributes stem from the left brain and allow a clear methodology of decision-making to take place. To ‘think big’ or to be creative are common attributes of right brain thinking.

For many, left brain leadership can be seen as a comfortable place. It includes statistics to guide decisions, risks are mitigated at every turn, processes are familiar and the business ticks along in a very orderly fashion. However, businesses today require fast pace changes, decisions made on gut feeling, flexibility and often going down the path of most resistance.

The fourth industrial revolution is upon us and the world stage looks completely different to five years ago. Robotics, AI, quantum computing, 3D printing, the Internet of Things (IoT) and biotechnology are all examples

of this revolution. Rural leaders will need to understand, embrace and foster these innovations as they become relative to the businesses in which they lead.

While the world is changing rapidly around us, we are also dealing with a specific issue within the New Zealand primary sector. We export over 90% of our primary production, Rotherham (2016), we have a major environmental issue on our hands, partially due to intensification, our markets are about to see a wave of synthetic products that could replace the need for much of our volume and the only solution I see to this issue is a mass shift to value-add production. So, how do you create added value in this rapidly evolving context? I believe you think differently, you think like your customers and you act fast

Given this forecast of uncertain things to come, I explore the leadership capabilities that may be needed to manage this complexity in the 21st century.

My research not only explores the ‘why’ and the ‘what’, it also explores the ‘how’ and includes interesting case studies demonstrating what change might look like.



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Emotional intelligence: Seismic shifts in the primary industry compel whole brain leadership.



Joanna Greaves

2021 and prior

Enthusiasm and passion for the Primary Industry, and it's people, ignited an aspiration to understand how the Primary Sector is going to boost human capability to achieve it's ambitions of doubling export earnings by 2025. Seismic market movements, international politics, technological advances and climate change all contribute to an unsettled and fickle business environment. Increasing complexity requires resilient leaders, and businesses, to be economically sustainable to withstand the challenges we face in the future. Involvement in the Dairy Sector fostered an awareness of the challenges business leaders are facing, particularly in terms of leading a team. Curious to learn more, the purpose of this report is to understand how Emotional Intelligence could influence leadership capability in the Primary Sector.

The capability to manage this level of disruption, presents a management challenge to those who operate in the Primary Sector. The same drivers that have delivered performance are no longer adequate to lead success in the future. Although leadership success starts with a vision, a leader's performance is dependent on their ability to influence the behaviour of their team. It is about the ability to influence beyond positional power, influencing people to work towards a common goal with enthusiasm. Leaders are challenged to cultivate an environment to build capability, inspire the right behaviour and unlock potential; all characteristics underpinning high performing teams.

Parallels were significant between the literature review and the interview process, undoubtedly supporting my anecdotal views that emotional intelligence is a crucial precursor to exemplary leadership. Fifteen dairy business leaders were interviewed and results were analysed, identifying

five key themes. Leaders demonstrating higher levels of self-awareness tended to be people focused, they knew themselves, their capabilities, and limitations. Energised to execute with integrity, they were motivated to build relationships and foster an environment for growing others. In times of disruption, they appeared to be adaptive and resilient. The five themes were as follows:

1. Prevalent left wired brain approaches are managing the journey with less awareness of the influence that EQ competencies are contributing to business performance.
2. A disrupted intrinsic compass is inhibiting the growth of our sector. The New Zealand Primary Industry is characterised by industry uncertainty and a lack of emotional and adaptive resilience is influencing the ability to deal with disruption.
3. Disruption is hindering leaders' capability to energise and execute effectively. Farmers' coping mechanism is to dig deep, working longer and harder, losing sight of the rituals that energise, tending to be reactive in their behaviour.
4. Task focused leadership methods are skewing the ability to build high trust team relationships. Farmers acknowledged difficulty with understanding the diversity of our finger print on the world, the way you see the world is different to the way another person views the world.
5. Leveraging positional power is impeding the capability to unleash potential and build high performing teams. Conversations with farmers indicated the 'do as I say and not do as I do' leadership styles are prevalent.



Farmers are passionate about their stock and their pastures. Harvesting the best grass, requires cultivating the best soil for the grass to grow. Breeding the best young stock, cultivating the best pastures, seeking nutrient management advice, and purchasing a big green tractor. These investments all appear to be easily justified. Investment in people, appears to be less of a focus.

People management is indifferent; it is about nurturing the right environment to promote growth. This sets the beat of an organisation. Igniting this type of environment strengthens responsibility and accountability, the potential to increase both productivity and performance. Farmers are proud, and so they should be. It is however this pride and the 'tall poppy syndrome' that has been nurtured so well in New Zealand that is inhibiting our ability to lead effectively. Increasing complexity and the rise of the millennial generation will continue to challenge. The best leaders are learners, they are humble when they do not know something and are open to seeking new ideas and processes. Gone are the days where it was thought to be a weakness to acknowledge your shortcomings and seek help.

The pivotal element to drive this change is embracing a whole brain leadership strategy. Building emotional intelligence competencies will aid to engage this holistic attitude.

1. Lead from the inside out by tuning into the intrinsic compass. To lead others, we must first lead ourselves, to lead ourselves, we must know ourselves.
2. Energise to execute. Prioritise Personal Power. The ability to ignite enthusiasm, influence and motivate teams will be driven by leaders with significant personal energy, actively valuing themselves, to be the best person possible.
3. Activate with Purpose. Know your why. A sense of purpose drives feet on the

floor every single day. Attract your tribe through a shared value based mindset, igniting the power to shape behaviour.

4. Pilot the focus. Shift to the blue head. Steering your focus is underpinned by the ability to anchor in disruptive environments, acting with edge to make the tough decisions. Focus is either diverted or on track.
5. Flex the social filter to tune into the emotional and social atmosphere of your teams. Connect. One size fits all rules do not apply. A distinguishing factor between those who will thrive will be dependent on the ability to understand what makes your team tick, build relationships and care about people. This does not run through the left brain.
6. Foster a learning climate to unleash potential. Create the right environment for the right behaviours to occur. Fuel the communication through rituals and beliefs that set the beat for the business, the team language shapes the values, values shape behaviour.

New Zealand has the best rugby team. Why? The All Blacks have the best coaches and the best culture. Why? Their actions are underpinned by the belief that leadership is an inside job, it starts with knowing yourself. The Primary Sector can learn from this attitude. The capability to meet the intricacies of an ever-changing business arena and the vision of the Primary Industry for 2025 hinges on fostering a world class learning environment. Learning environments should not only be challenging the intellectual capability but emotional parameters as well if it is to have the opportunity to build a great leader. The obvious barrier is the ability to build on this momentum. Building one's emotional intelligence will not occur without commitment and effort. A how-to manual will not suffice, this is not for the faint hearted.



<https://ruralleaders.co.nz/joanna-greaves>



Leadership: What are the key attributes for success?



Hayden Dunne

2021 and prior

Leadership is one of the many fundamental components of a successful business. Understanding and appreciating what makes up leadership can ultimately drive success. No matter what the business size, sector or turnover, a successful business requires great leadership.

To be a great leader requires a particular skill set; not everyone is naturally a leader. However, research has shown that successful leadership is a process and can be learned; there are definable skills that you need to possess to succeed.

What are the key skills that a successful leader needs to possess? Do leaders draw more on soft or hard skills? As generations change in character will the leaders of tomorrow need to draw on an alternative skill set? These are the key questions that have been researched in the following study.

Two approaches were used to investigate these questions. A literature review was completed looking at three studies with a focus on leadership skills. In addition a survey and six in person interviews were conducted with a group of agricultural leaders in the Marlborough region.

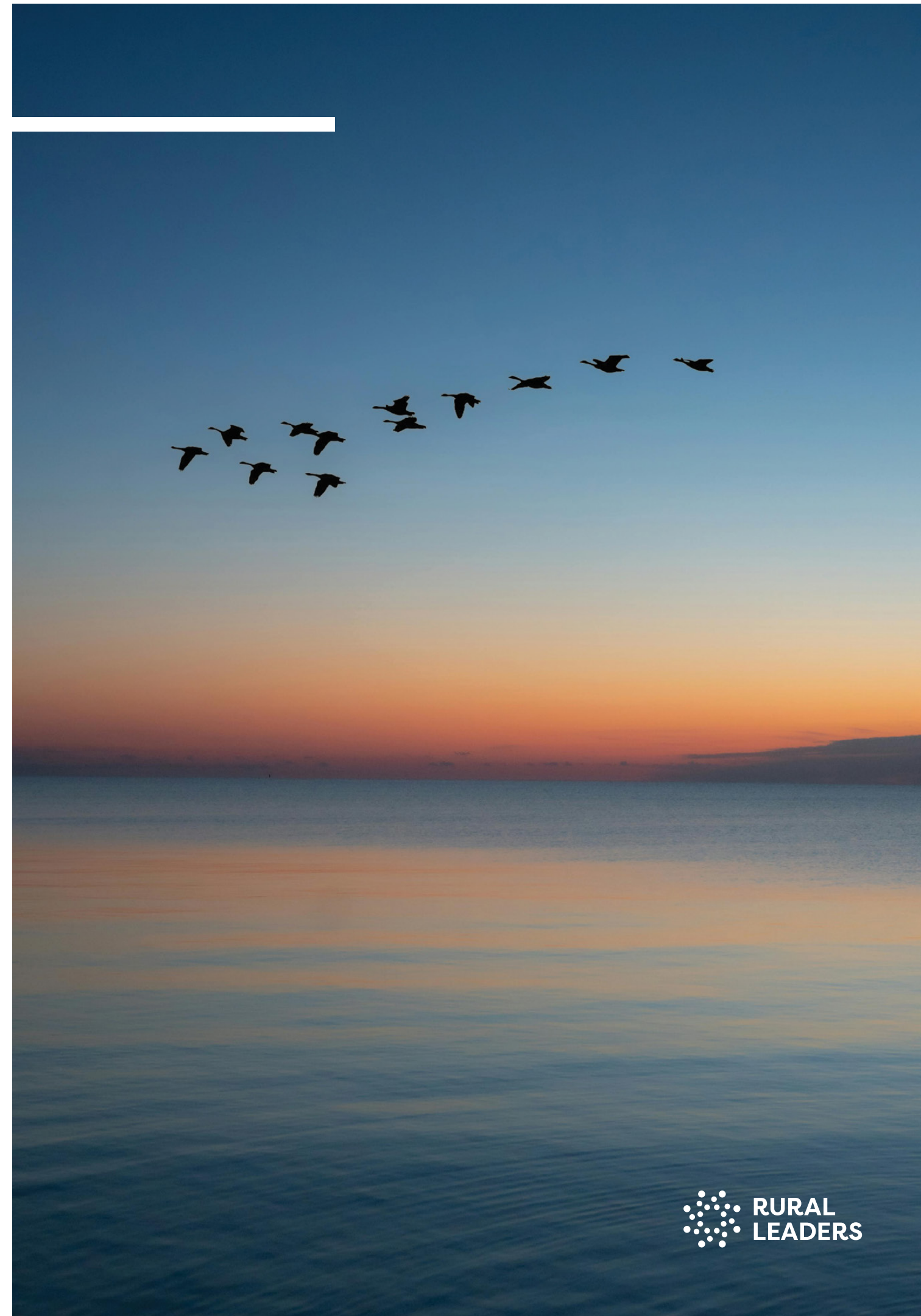
From the literature, survey and interviews key skills were highlighted that were critical to being a successful leader. Communication and listening ranked highly and when used effectively these skills build trust and inspire loyalty. Once trust is established a culture of safety develops allowing an environment where people are free to innovate. Kouzes and Posner (2012) stated that people who are perceived as trusting are more sought out as friends, more frequently listened to, and subsequently more influential. The most effective leadership situations are those in which each member of the team trusts the others.

The key recommendations that have come from this report for leaders are;

- Good Communication and effective skills are essential. If done effectively and genuinely it allows people to feel closer to their leader building trust, teamwork, engagement and ultimately results
- Support and develop others. In showing commitment to growth, people are motivated to reciprocate by often going the extra mile. Leaders need to recognise that great things cannot be achieved all by themselves.
- Relationships. To be an effective leader you must first understand the people you are leading; building a relationship takes effort. By adopting a relationship-driven approach leaders can earn the trust and confidence of an increasingly diverse workforce and improve long-term retention.
- Integrity. Getting this right is fundamental for success. Integrity is consistently rated as one of the most important character traits of a respected leader.
- Leadership style. If you try to simply adopt a company's style or try to copy someone else's style your lack of authenticity will show through. It is about being self-aware, knowing what you stand for and what is important.
- Soft skills are now becoming increasingly important for the future workforce, as a leader being aware that you need skills such as listening, creativity, agility, and problem solving are becoming as important as expertise and technical competency.



<https://ruralleaders.co.nz/hayden-dunne/>



The effective leadership of remote agribusiness sales teams.



Nick de Ridder

2021 and prior

The New Zealand Agricultural Sector makes up about two thirds of the exported goods from New Zealand and as such remains the most important industry for New Zealand's economy. Agricultural farms span from Stewart Island in the South to Cape Reinga in the North, some 1600 km away and from one coast line in the east to the other in the west up to 400km apart, with a total land mass of 268,000 square kilometres. For Agribusinesses who wish to support these farmers with products and services, this is a logistical challenge.

Traditionally in New Zealand the method in which farmers have traded with Agribusinesses who supply them with products, services and advice is over the kitchen table. This originates from a time when technology such as mobile phones, the internet, fax machines and overnight courier were still to be discovered. Farmers would less frequently travel to town, either because the distance was too far, the roads too poor or there was no need.

Co-operatives were formed and as such there were milk processing companies nearby, a fertiliser distributor, a farm supplies store and a bank. A local representative from the respective Agricultural Company would visit the farmer on farm, have discussions and provide advice around their requirements and then ensure these products or services were deployed to the farm accordingly. As technology has evolved farmers are now able to use multiple platforms to engage with their farm supply companies. There are multiple communication channels and most products and services that a farmer may need can be purchased and subsequently delivered without even talking to somebody. However as a result of history the large proportion of customers still prefer to conduct business over the kitchen table and as a result most agribusinesses in New Zealand have Sales representatives dispersed as far

as Kaitaia to Gore. The majority of these businesses do not have headquarters, offices or stores in all of these regions so the sales representative typically works from a home office and their line manager is usually over 100km's away working from a separate location.

From a leadership perspective this poses challenges for the manager of these dispersed teams when it comes to creating a high performing team who feel part of a team, are well coached, rewarded, recognised for their achievements, trained and where necessary their performance managed. Unlike the typical office environment where a manager will see and interact face to face with their reports often on a daily basis, having employees 100km away and often mobile on the road means the manager requires a unique set of skills. As a leader of a remote based sales team in the agricultural sector I saw an opportunity to understand this dynamic better and review existing literature and research which has been done on the topic and also conduct my own survey of other rural leaders in the same position as to how they lead their teams.

After reviewing literature and from my own experience in the area of leading a remote sales team I decided to take a closer look at 5 keys areas of leading a remote sales team: the team dynamic, coaching, effective feedback, reward and recognition and productivity.

Existing literature confirmed that remote sales teams can be highly effective and productive if led well with a clear vision and purpose. The key to success is having a well-designed team who understand what their job is, are kept well informed of how they are doing, have a good relationship with their manager and are clear on what their future is. Management is a discipline which



has changed dramatically over time and is now a lot less effective. To be an effective coach in a leadership role will improve team performance at a greater rate than management in the purist sense. Reward and recognition are key elements of keeping a team productive, positive and engaged. And under the right leadership remote teams can be more productive than their office based counterparts.

For leaders reading this discussion paper there are five take home messages: recruit the right team, give them a clear purpose, tap into their hearts and minds by being an effective coach, reward and recognise to drive the right behaviour and provide regular, effective and meaningful feedback to improve the effectiveness of your people.



<https://ruralleaders.co.nz/nick-de-ridder>

Leadership research and design by Rural Leaders.

Recent Rural Leaders’ commissioned and collaborative leadership projects include work with Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence and The Mackenzie Charitable Foundation. The results of this work are shared here.

In August 2022, The Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence (FFCoVE) requested the New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust conduct research into the current state of leader development in the Food and Fibre sector.

This first report delivers findings on [the state of leadership development in our Food and Fibre sector](#). It suggests six principles of leadership that are relevant to the sector.

This second report, [A Principles-centred Leadership Model for Aotearoa New Zealand’s Food and Fibre Sector](#), builds on the first report. It proposes a model that states leaders who truly lead unleash their potential and that of those around them. They create an exponential impact for the Food and Fibre sector and for Aotearoa.

This third report, [A Path to Realising Leadership Potential in Aotearoa NZ’s Food and Fibre Sector](#), is enriched by the concepts of Te Ao Māori and of Pacific cultures. It does not claim to provide a definitive answer to leadership, but instead offers a principles-centred model for leading in the Sector, encouraging leaders to find their personal leadership approach and to embark on their own path. (Read more on the opposite page).

The Mackenzie Charitable Foundation undertook [research](#) alongside the New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust, in collaboration with Otago Business School and the Department of Economics, investigating the contribution of Kellogg and Nuffield Alumni to Food and Fibre. The research period covers 72 years of Nuffield and 43 years of Kellogg Rural Scholarship.



Realising leadership potential in Aotearoa New Zealand’s food and fibre sector.

[‘A Path to Realising Leadership Potential in Aotearoa NZ’s Food and Fibre Sector’](#) is the result of a collaboration between Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) and the New Zealand Rural Leadership Trust (Rural Leaders).

The report, enriched by the concepts of Te Ao Māori and of Pacific cultures, does not claim to provide a definitive answer to leadership, but instead offers a principles-centred model for leading in the sector, encouraging leaders to find their personal leadership approach and to embark on their own path.

Recognising that leadership development is not a linear path and acknowledging the diversity and complexity of the sector, the research proposes a dynamic, living ecosystem. An ecosystem that can be interacted with, leveraged, adapted, shared, and yet retain a common essence that can be spread across the way we work, interact with others, and envision the future.

“A sustained flow of capable and self-aware leaders is critical to the Food and Fibre sector remaining vital and vibrant into the future. The Sector needs leaders that are continuously developing themselves and the teams they work with”, said Lisa Rogers, CEO, Rural Leaders.

This report follows previous research which looked at the state of leadership development in NZ, and also proposed a principles-centred leadership model for the Sector.

The report synthesises the thinking from the first two reports and provides a framework for the Sector to develop a flow of prepared leaders to step into ever more impactful roles.

“This work is an important step in the pathway to providing a tangible framework for leadership development for the whole of the Food and Fibre sector, which will not only be for the betterment of our sector’s people but for the betterment of the country,” said Kate Scott, Chair, NZ Rural Leadership Trust.

Dr Lilla du Toit, Portfolio Manager, Food and Fibre CoVE commented, “This research project holds immense importance for the Food and Fibre sector, significantly shaping the development of leadership roles across all the industries it serves. It will also play a crucial role in fortifying two other key leadership initiatives, namely the Horticulture NZ Leadership Programme redesign by Rural Leaders, and the Food and Fibre CoVE and Muka Tangata backed Food and Fibre Māori Leadership Development Framework.”

Rural Leaders wish to acknowledge the authors for their work on this report, and the project’s collaboration partners, Food and Fibre CoVE. Rural Leaders would also like to acknowledge the generous support of Strategic Partners DairyNZ, FMG, AGMARDT, Mackenzie Charitable Foundation, and Programme Partners LIC, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Farmlands Co-operative, Zespri, MPI, FAR, Horticulture NZ, and Rabobank.

MyLead - identifying Aotearoa New Zealand's food and fibre leadership development pathways.

[MyLead.co.nz](https://mylead.co.nz) went live in late May 2025.

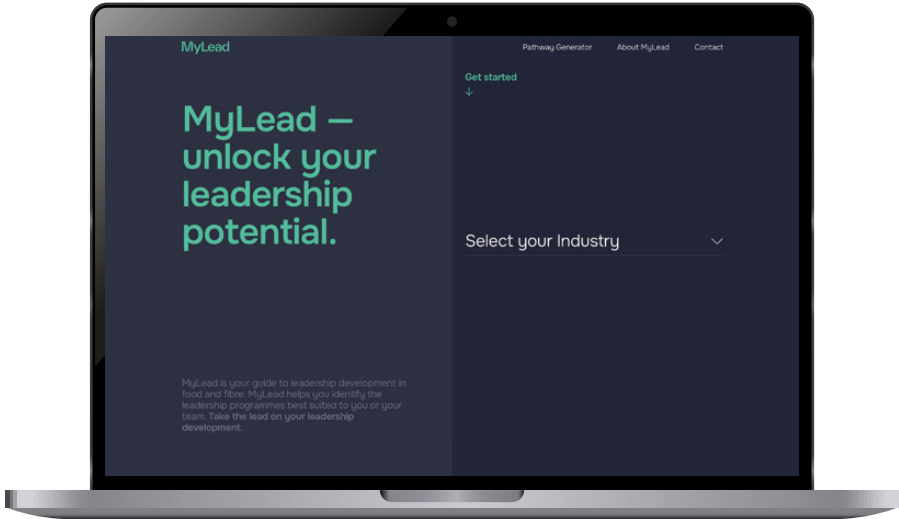
Aligned to the NZ Rural Leadership Trust's (Rural Leaders) purpose to grow world-class leaders for our country, MyLead helps to identify development pathways for people at all stages of their leadership journey.

This site is just one outcome of the research mentioned on the previous page; conducted by Rural Leaders and commissioned by Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE). The site draws down information from this research that is relevant to each user.

MyLead allows a user of the site to generate a leadership development pathway based on two data inputs, 'current leadership stage' and 'industry'.

Along with this pathway, MyLead gives actionable outcomes from the research's latest Leadership Pathways Report, covered on the previous page. The site gives practical examples people can implement into practice immediately.

It's a starting point for anyone taking the lead on their, or their team's, leadership development.



"If our sector is to grow stronger it must nurture a sustained flow of capable and self-aware leaders that are continuously developing themselves and the teams they work with", said Lisa Rogers, Rural Leaders CEO.

It is our hope that MyLead will help nurture our people and play a role in building an ever more vital and vibrant food and fibre sector into the future. We'll continue to update and improve the site for the medium term, before offering programme partners to opportunity to login and manage their own programme(s) content.

A special thank you to all participating MyLead programme partners: NZ Young Farmers, AWDT, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Business Torque Systems Ltd., University of Canterbury, DairyNZ, Dairy Training Ltd., Lead With Virtue, Mayfield Group, NZIPIM (NZ Institute of Primary Industry Management), Rural Coach, Rabobank New Zealand, HALO Training, Rural Leaders, STAMP, The University of Waikato, Horticulture New Zealand, Farmlands Co-operative Society Limited, Livestock Improvement Corporation (LIC), Activating Potential, FoodHQ, Silver Fern Farms Ltd.

Thank you to our partners.

A special thank you to our strategic and programmes partners for their unwavering support, making the development and the delivery of the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme possible.

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